INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR OF INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE ASPIRANTS

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1. Introduction

Information is very indispensable nowadays and it helps us to cope up with the changes which are rapidly taking place in this world. A society rich in information is rich in socio- economic spheres. It not only shapes the society and creates its structure but also affects the elements which constitute it. Information is mankind's most valuable resources which has played and continues to play a crucial role in building human civilization and society. Due to its nature information is counted as one of the major resources of a country and therefore, it must be ensured that it is exploited, mobilized, organized and utilized for the betterment of people. Therefore it is the basic responsibility of the government to provide information services to different community. Information behaviour covers a major portion of the human being's activities which depend on the use of information, gaps of information supply, and types of information requirements to meet variety of use and it have become the focus of study today. In an era of continuous technological developments in conjunction with information overload, information user studies continue to be a vital tool enabling information professionals to improve both their understanding of information use and delivery.

People need information, right from the organisational level to the personal level, from the educated person to school children, from reputed person to layman for taking the right decision in every step of life. Information needs vary in relation to the subject fields of their users, educational backgrounds, experience level, and the function performed. This variable may affect a person's interest in the type of information he seeks and how he goes about obtaining that information. Now-a-days plethora of information is being generated and we are confronted with excessive growth of information which leads to information explosion, exponential information pollution. Due to information explosion the people are confused about the access to right information, information needs, and various information

sources. So also the information is required to be reprocessed and repackaged for different types of users so as to suit their need.

2. Information behaviour

Until recently the information science communities have equated requirements of users with the way users behave in relation to the information systems available. In other words, investigations into information requirements were concerned entirely with how a user navigated a given system and what he or she could do with the information provided through information systems. Information Behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. Thus, it includes face to face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given. While Information seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web (Wilson, 2000).

Case (2002) defined information behaviour as "Information behaviour encompasses information seeking as well as the totality of other unintentional or passive behaviours (such as glimpsing or encountering information) as well as purposive behaviour that do not involve seeking such as avoiding information". Based on the general model of information behaviour developed by Wilson (1997), he posited that a general model of information behaviour needs to include at least three elements:

i. An information need and its drives, i.e. the factors that give rise to an individual's perception of need,

ii. The factors that affect the individual's response to the perception of needs; and,

iii. The processes or actions involved in that response (Esew, Aisha Makarfi, Goshie, & Aisha Jimada, 2014)

3. Civil service

Civil service means the body of government officials who are employed in civil occupations that is neither political nor judicial. It is a professional body of individuals employed by the state in an administrative capacity. Ideally, it is a non political body whose members serve in the military, constabulary, ministerial or diplomatic branches of government. The civil service is a subdivision of government which is usually grouped with the Executive, and without which governments cannot function. It does not include ministers or cabinet members or the Judiciary. In a democracy, the policy of the administration is determined and laid down by political executives, but the policy is carried out and the administration is largely run by the civil servants. Civil servants are generally regarded as experts in public affairs and administration and are often utilized as neutral advisors by those responsible for state policy. The services provided by the Civil Service are largely public goods - defence and security, law and order, education, healthcare, physical infrastructure, transport, telecommunications, etc. Idode, (1986), explained civil service as the "array of administrative and professional staff employed, on permanent and pensionable basis to established posts, by the state, to advise on and execute its policies".

Civil services as an organization are expected to play a pivotal role, in process of development. With their emphasis on rules and regulations, division of labour, hierarchy, role specialists, rationality, impersonality and neutrality, the civil services are expected to ensure smooth process of development. In the development process civil services plays an important role in policy making

and policy implementation. It helps the executive in identifying the major policy areas such as preparing major policy proposals, analyzing various alternatives and solutions to societal problems requiring urgent attention, dividing the major policies into sub-policies, determining programmes of action and suggesting modification in the existing policy. Further the majority of contacts between the state and society occur through the public civil services, and these contacts are important for political inputs as well as for administration of programs. (Role of civil service in democracy, http://iasscore.in/pdf/samplenotes/1.%20Role%20of%20Civil%20Services%20in%20a%20democracy.pdf)

4. Civil Service in India

The public administration system in India has been established since ancient times. There is immense importance of the civil service system in the administrative system which acts as the most vital tool for governance of India. In post-independent India, civil service was reorganised. There are three tiers of administration that include Union/Central Government, State Government, and Local Government. At the central level, the civil service include the All India Services, namely the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Forest Service (IFS), and Indian Police Service (IPS). Besides these, there are other Central Services such as the Indian Revenue Service, Indian Railways Service and Indian Defence Accounts Service etc. at central level. The State Governments have their own set of services like State Civil Service (Pandey, 2007).

The profession of civil service in India is very much prestigious job in the society. India is a democratic country and in this system, power confers with the people. The power is exercised through its designated representatives who have the command to manage them for a particular period. The civil services by quality of its knowledge, experience and understanding of public affairs support the chosen representatives to device effective policy and have

great responsibility to implement these policies for the welfare of society and enhancement of nation. India is a constitutional fairness and its operations usually depend upon four supports that include Legislature, Executive, Judiciary, and Free Press. Each one of these has been assigned its role in democratic establishment. First three of these are associated with the governance of the state. They form the stable structure and support of Indian Administration System.

The importance of the civil service to the Indian administrative system develops from the following factors:

1. Service presence throughout the country and its strong binding character.
2. Non-partisan advice to political leadership in the midst of political instability and uncertainties.
3. Effective policy-making and regulation.
4. Effective coordination between institutions of governance.
5. Leadership at different levels of administration.
6. Service delivery at the cutting edge level.
7. Provide "continuity and change" to the administration.

It has been observed that civil services are considered as the main component of Indian administrative system that has the responsibility to accomplish the development objectives and welfare of the state. If these objectives have any failure or shortcomings, it has been thought that it is a failure of civil services. (http://www.civilserviceindia.com/subject/General-Studies/notes/role-of-civil-services-in-a-democracy.html)

5. Importance of information for Civil Service Aspirants

According to UNESCO the information needs of a particular group of users do not remain constant but change along with educational development of the acquisition of personal and professional experiences. It could, therefore, be argued that information needs and gathering behaviour of any professional or such groups are not only for the development of the individual but for the future of their profession. Professional use a variety of widely different approaches to fulfill their information needs. The information behaviour depends on the specific requirements of an individual faculty. Civil service cadre cannot be attained without in-depth and adequate information about various subjects within the purview of the syllabus. Appropriate knowledge can be acquired only by systematically gathering information from different information sources. The candidates should be well versed about the different sources available. Moreover the gathered information has to be utilised properly to accomplish and excel in the civil service competitive examination.

6. Review of related studies

Literature review is very important in the sense that the researcher reviews the literature not only to compare the results with the previous results but also to present new and perhaps with unique dimensions. The study of previous research findings gives a clue about the potential areas of fresh research and missing links in the process of research in a particular field.

Akinbinu and Tiamiyu (2016) investigated the attitude of senior civil servants in making policies in terms of the types, availability and accessibility of research information in making policy and the challenges encountered in the course of using them. The descriptive research method was adopted, using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire to gather information from 166 senior civil servants randomly selected from selected ministries in Lagos state. Results indicated that information provided by ones ministry, information on

infrastructural development and information on human resources and skills available at ones ministry are the most used information by policymakers in making policy.

Amin & Shima (2007) conducted a study to find out the information needs and information seeking behaviour of professionals in an Irankhodro, Axle manufacturing company in Iran. The main aim of the study was to find out the adequacy and the preferences in choosing information resources. The questionnaires were distributed to 130 users consisting of engineers and experts of professional units and departments of the company. The results indicated that there are differences in the information needs and information seeking behaviour of those in the categories of Social Science and Engineering and many similarities in information seeking behaviour of those in the categories of Social Science and Accounting and Trade.

Bigdeli (2007) studied Iranian Engineer's Information needs and seeking habits in an agro industry company in Iran adopting questionnaire using Likert-type question covering 150 respondents. The result has proposed that the librarian should follow Zipf's principles to serve their clients. Based on this principle an information-seeking client will tend to use the most convenient search method, in the least exacting mode available.

Seaman (2002) examined the information gathering strategies of software maintainers. The objective of the work was to discover the ways that maintainers gain information about the systems they are maintaining. The survey was completed by 45 software professionals in different organisation with varying degrees of experience in maintenance. This survey study constituted three stages, with each stage depending on the finding on the earlier stages. It was found that maintainers depend mainly on source code, particular human sources, some types of CASE support and lessons learned from previous projects.

In a survey on information gathering habits of R & D scientists, **Garg, Kailash Chandra (1984)** examined 75 scientists through a questionnaire. It is observed that most of the scientists collected information keeping more than one objective and periodicals are the highly used sources of information gathering.

7. Relevance of the Study

Civil services form an integral part and play a crucial role in any modern democratic Government. The role of the civil service is to support the government in the development and delivery of its policies. Civil servants are almost entirely recruited through open competitive examinations. The Civil Services Examination (CSE) is a nationwide competitive examination in India conducted by the Union Public Service Commission for recruitment to various Civil Services of the Government of India, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Revenue Service (IRS). The examination is the toughest examination in India, and a success rate of only 0.1%-0.3%, one of the lowest in the world.

The civil service aspirants are the candidates who wish to attend the national wide examination and want to gain the goal of serving the nation as civil service officials. Gathering information in a well structured way is of utmost importance to them. Moreover, several studies were conducted on various aspects of information behaviour among different groups both in India and in abroad. However, while the researcher scanned the available literature on information user studies, it reveals that the studies based on civil community in Indian context are very scanty. Therefore, the present investigator felt the need to fill this gap and hence a study is undertaken with an intention to analyse the information behaviour of civil service aspirants. This study proposes to ascertain the various methods and channels of information gathering adopted by civil service aspirants attached to civil service training institutes in South India.

The study also explores the difficulties and hindrance faced by civil service aspirants in gathering required information in the process of this preparation. The proposed study will be highly useful to give proper recommendation that would help in providing pertinent and right information to the civil service aspirants in order to prepare for the national wide examination. This study is of paramount significance as it promotes the design and development of resources and services oriented towards them. Once the information behaviour of civil service aspirants are understood, the role of library in terms of collection and services could be optimized.

8. Statement of the Problem

The present study intends to assess the strategies adopted to gather information by the civil service aspirants in south India and to evaluate their information access pattern. Hence the present research problem is conceived under the title "**Information behaviour of Indian Civil Service Aspirants."**

9. Definition of Key Concepts

The operational definition of terms used in the title of the study is presented.

9.1. Information behaviour

Information is defined by the Glossary of Library and Information Science (2004) as "the data presented in readily comprehensible form, to which meaning has been attributed within a context for its use. In a more dynamic sense, it is the message conveyed by the use of a medium of communication or expression".

According to Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences (2010) "Information behaviour is the currently preferred term used to describe the many ways in which human beings interact with information, in particular, the ways in which people seek and utilize information. Information behaviour is

also the term of art used in library and information science (LIS) to refer to a sub discipline that engages in a wide range of types of research conducted in order to understand the human relationship to information".

9.2. Indian

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1976) explains Indian as "relating to, or characteristic of one of the peoples of the subcontinent of India or the East Indies".

9.3. Civil Service

Civil service as defined by the New Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1994) is "the body of government officials who are employed in civil occupations those are neither political nor judicial".

9.4. Aspirants

The world Book Dictionary (1981) defined aspirants as "a person who aspires, especially one who seeks a position of honour".

10. Objectives of the study

The primary objective of the study is to explore the information behaviour of the civil service aspirants in South India which includes those who are preparing for the civil service examination from the state of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telungana that cover the southern part of India. In order to accomplish the above objectives, this study incorporates the following specific objectives.

1. To determine the information requirements of Indian civil service aspirants.

2. To examine the information gathering strategies of Indian civil service aspirants.

3. To investigate the availability and satisfaction level of different information sources and channels for the Indian civil service aspirants.

4. To find out the perceived effectiveness of the existing information systems and services and the extent to which they meet the information requirements of Indian civil service aspirants.

5. To assess the role of library in meeting the information requirements of Indian civil service aspirants.

6. To find out the barriers that inhibits adequate information gathering of Indian civil service aspirants.

7. To understand the level of information literacy skills possessed by Indian civil service aspirants to promote information gathering.

11. Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There is a significant variation in the information requirements of Indian civil service aspirants based on their subject, gender and family background.

2. The information behaviour of Indian civil service aspirants has a significant variation based on their subject, gender and family background.

3. The existing information systems and services are not much effective to meet their information requirements.

4. Libraries could play a significant role in imparting information to the Indian civil service aspirants.

12. Research Design

The study which intends to seek the information behaviour of civil service aspirants employs an analytical research design. It also intends to seek the effectiveness of the existing information systems and services. The potential population for the study comprises of those candidates who are preparing for the civil service examination in the southern part of India. The study proposes to use questionnaires, interviews and observation methods to collect data. The study will be based on primary and secondary data which can be collected by these standard methodological tools. Multi stage sampling technique will be adopted for the particular study. The data collected for the study will be tabulated, analyzed and presented with the help of appropriate tools of analysis.

13. Variables of the Study

The variables of the study are divided into Demographic (independent) variables and Study (dependent) variables

Demographic (independent) variables of the study are; Gender, Family - socio-economic-educational background, subject or discipline in graduation, rural or urban and government or private institution.

The Study (dependent) variables are; information requirements, availability and satisfaction level of different information sources and channels, effectiveness of the existing information systems and services, role of library in meeting the information requirements, barriers of adequate information behaviour and information literacy skills possessed by civil service aspirants.

14. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Being in an era of information explosion, it is essential to understand whether the right information reaches the hands of the end user. This research study is limited to understand the information requirements and the information behaviour adopted by the Indian civil service aspirants only in south India. The

study covers only the civil service aspirants of the southern part of India, i.e., Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telungana. The study will be conducted on a sample of statistical valid number of aspirants of various levels in government as well as private training institutions in the south Indian states in the country. The aspirants who are not undergoing training in any institutes or self preparing for civil service examination are not considered for the study.

15. Conclusion

The civil service is a prestigious and important job in public sector in democratic India. For attaining the different positions in civil service the aspirants must attain the top rank through the all India competitive examination conducted by UPSA. Tedious effort and preparation must be carried out for succeeding the test. It is very essential to systematically gather adequate and needed information for fulfilling their dreams. For getting the proper information it is very essential to understand from where, how and through which channels the right information is obtained. The study investigates the adequacy of the existing information systems and services and the measures that should be adopted to minimise the hurdles that inhibit adequate information behaviour.

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